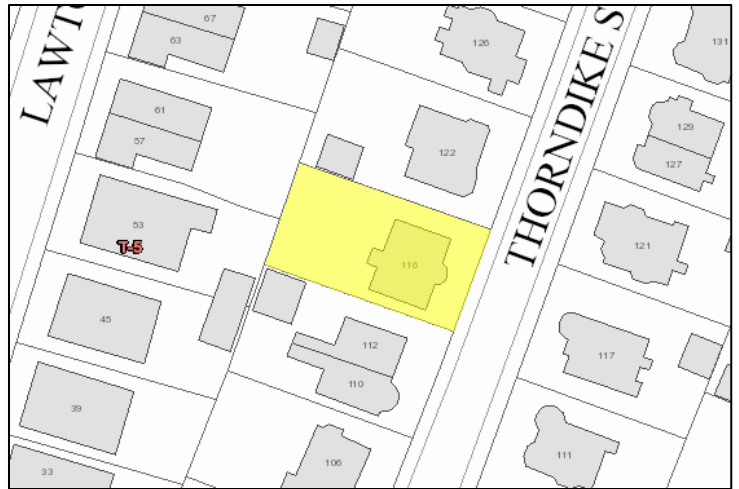


Brookline Preservation Commission

Demolition Application Report

Address: 116 Thorndike Street
Applicant: 116 Thorndike Street, LLC
Building Type: House (Full)
National Register Listing (if Applicable): NA



Historical/Architectural Significance:

The house was constructed between 1895 and 1898 by developer David H. McKay. McKay was born in New Brunswick, Canada, and entered the real estate business upon moving to Boston. In 1889 McKay purchased a 7 ½ acre farm between Harvard and Winchester Streets, subdividing it and laying out lots for 46 houses on standard lots of about 60' x 80'. In 1895 McKay purchased 32 acres known as Babcock Hill, east of Harvard Street, creating 143 lots. McKay developed many of these homes himself while also selling individual lots or sections to others. McKay contracted architects to design the exterior of the homes in Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Shingle styles; designs were rarely repeated within the development. The interiors, which he designed himself, were organized to maximize household convenience, offering built-in pantries, laundry facilities and a combination of gas and electric lights. This is the largest known development undertaken by a single individual in Brookline's history. Constructed after the completion of the Beacon Street electric trolley line in 1889, the area is a fine example of a "streetcar suburb", constructed to appeal to those commuting to Boston for work. McKay moved to Brookline with his wife Martha and four children when the development began; the family resided at 143 Winchester Street. After McKay's death in 1898, Martha continued to own many of the homes in the development, renting them out; she had sold off the remaining lots by 1900.

Originally known as 94 Thorndike Street, the house at 116 Thorndike Street was constructed as a single family, part of the large Babcock Hill development. Though a building permit could not be located for this property, it was developed by McKay, likely using one of his architects. This is one of the homes that Martha McKay continued to own and rent out after McKay's death. The 2 ½ story Queen Anne home rises from a stone foundation to a hipped roof broken by small gabled dormers on the side and rear elevations. The façade is dominated by a 2 ½ story curved tower that projects forward of the main body of the house. This tower has retained its original 1/1 curved glass windows on the first and second floor. On the first floor, an open rectangular entry porch frames the center entry. The home is clad in clapboards

at the first floor, shingles above. At the second floor, the shingles are flared in horizontal bands that align with the windows; one of these carries through the center tower to meet the tops of the windows there, which are set at a lower level than the rest of the 2nd floor windows. The cornice is elaborated with dentils and a wide frieze, which are also found at the first floor porch. The right elevation has a curved bay window at the first floor with brackets beneath. Changes to this house over the years include the rebuilding of the front and rear porches, window replacements, repair of the fascia and soffit, gutter replacements and the 1961 conversion of the single family home to a two family.

The house at 116 Thorndike Street meets the following criteria for an initial determination of significance:

- c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the town or Commonwealth; and
- d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group of buildings.

The building at 116 Thorndike Street retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, and workmanship.



Aerial view of 116 Thorndike Street, looking east.



Aerial view of 116 Thorndike Street, looking north.



Aerial view of 116 Thorndike Street, looking west.



Aerial view of 116 Thorndike Street, looking south.





Views from Thorndike Street





Curved tower at the center of the façade





Views of the surrounding streetscape



